

# **Eighth Meeting of the Independent Evaluation Panel**

## Summary Notes

11-12 September 2024

Virtual meeting

## Purpose

This document presents the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP), held virtually from 11 to 12 September 2024.

**Agenda items.** The meeting comprised six (6) agenda items.

**Decisions.** The Report includes a full record of the two (2) Decision Points adopted by the IEP (Annex 1).

**Documents.** A document list is attached to this report (Annex 2).

**Participants.** The participant list is attached to this report (Annex 3).

**Action Points.** The report includes a table of action points arising from the meeting (Annex 4).

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# Report

## Opening

The IEP Interim Chair and Vice Chair opened the meeting by welcoming IEP members, staff of the Evaluation and Learning Office (ELO), and new Secretariat members working on IEP and ELO matters. The IEP Interim Chair summarized the agenda of the eighth IEP meeting and welcomed new ex-officio member Harley Feldbaum, Head of the Strategy and Policy Hub (SPH).

The IEP Interim Chair requested disclosures of conflicts of interest from IEP members, emphasizing the importance of transparency and independence in preserving trust in the IEP. Several disclosures were made, none of which required IEP members to recuse themselves from discussions.

The Strategy Committee (SC) representative provided an update on the two evaluation-specific discussions at the 25th SC meeting in July 2024, including approval of the 2025 Evaluation Workplan and approval of revisions to the IEP Terms of Reference (TORs), as well as other SC discussions relevant to the IEP. The IEP Interim Chair flagged the SC discussions on Strategic Initiatives as something for the IEP to consider.

## Chief Evaluation and Learning Officer Operational Update

The Chief Evaluation and Learning Officer (CELO) provided the IEP with an operational update on ongoing evaluations and ELO operations. The CELO emphasized that sustainability and simplification are major themes for the Secretariat, with linked actions and discussions informed by the evaluations done to date. It was remarked that the 2025 workplan budget was pending decision, with no potential impact on the planned evaluations foreseen. The IEP was notified that the ELO synthesis report would be released in the spring and that, in the meantime, the ELO would continue to foster a culture of evaluation.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Overall:** The IEP commended the shift in IEP meeting focus from process to evaluation implementation given that the past couple years were focused on creating the foundations for the evaluation function.
- **Data use and quality:** One IEP member queried how artificial intelligence is being used to question data and reports and simplify the process of summarizing findings. The CELO highlighted that ELO has made progress using natural language processing for the malaria evaluation and Imbizo and shared that the Global Fund data analytics team supports ELO in testing machine learning applications. Another IEP member asked about the quality of machine learning outputs and interpretation of data sets. The CELO agreed that the quality could not be assumed and noted that for the Imbizo evaluation the coordination group was discussing data governance and quality.
- **Theory of change (TOC):** IEP members emphasized the importance of TOCs, but one IEP member expressed concern that they were not being requested of the business owner as part of evaluation processes. The CELO noted that development of TOCs were not mandatory for Global Fund teams, resulting in some being more readily available than others, necessitating flexibility in the approach. The Vice Chair suggested that the ELO conduct an inventory of which TOCs exist across the Secretariat in relation to the evaluations approved as part of the Multiyear Evaluation Calendar to better understand the gaps.

- **Response fatigue:** One IEP member asked how the ELO was managing the risk of response fatigue by evaluation stakeholders, which the CELO validated as a concern. The CELO flagged that the order of some evaluation activities had been amended to address potential fatigue on behalf of survey subjects and teams within the Secretariat.
- **Technical evaluation committees (TECs):** One IEP member questioned if the time dedicated to the TEC process to assess bids of independent evaluators was sufficient to assess the quality of the proposals. The CELO pointed out that TEC time requirements and steps vary depending on the quality of submissions and number of outstanding concerns. The Interim Chair suggested that time be dedicated at the Ninth IEP meeting in December 2024 to reflect the experience with the TEC process.

Next steps:

- ELO to conduct an inventory of which TOCs exist across the Secretariat in relation to the evaluations approved as part of the Multiyear Evaluation Calendar to better understand the gaps.
- IEP to reflect on the experience of the TEC process at the Ninth IEP meeting in December 2024 as part of a session on IEP ways of working.

## **Funding Request and Grant Making Evaluation Final Report**

This session included a presentation by the ELO on the Funding Request and Grant-Making evaluation final report, which the IEP was asked to consider for IEP endorsement. The ELO highlighted the tight timeline for the report and underscored its importance in informing Grant Cycle 8 (GC8) preparations. The ELO also presented observations on the methodology used in the evaluation as well as on findings and recommendations, and on the structure and length of the final report.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **IEP focal point feedback:** The quality assurance focal point assured the IEP that the evaluation process was inclusive and transparent end-to-end, including during the TEC and procurement's decision-making. The quality assessment focal points shared with fellow IEP members that they found that the report was of good quality and made bold recommendations, with some issues raised, including the omission of detailed methodology from the core report and strength of evidence description from the executive summary.
- **Report quality and methodology:** Several IEP members highlighted the need for the detailed methodology and the rationale behind it to be a core component of the final report rather than included as an annex given the importance of explaining methodology to the overall quality of the evaluation. One IEP member queried why outstanding issues shared by the ELO had not been mitigated during the evaluation process, to which the ELO responded that less significant unresolved issues had to be balanced with evaluation timelines.
- **Evaluation findings and applicability:** One IEP member noted that the independent evaluator recommended significant changes to the funding request and grant-making processes despite the current processes delivering implementation-ready grants, without explanation of how implementation readiness would be maintained in light of suggested changes to the process. The IEP Vice Chair suggested the IEP highlight this in the IEP Commentary, and the ELO noted that the Secretariat's feedback on maintaining implementation readiness would be included in the Secretariat Management Response. The CELO highlighted that the user group of the evaluation was largely satisfied with the recommendations, despite some disagreement on specific recommendations and acknowledging the boldness of some that would require

agreement from not only the Secretariat but also the Strategy Committee and Board to be implemented. The Head of SPH questioned whether a six-year grant cycle would substantially reduce workload and noted that other report recommendations did not always acknowledge the justification behind current practices.

- **Learnings for other evaluations:** The IEP Vice Chair called attention to the inclusive and transparent process conducted by the ELO to manage the evaluation. One IEP member suggested that future evaluation timelines be determined on a case-by-case basis rather than standardized, suggesting this as a topic to discuss at the Ninth IEP Meeting in December 2024. Another IEP member called attention to the possibility of broadening future evaluation stakeholders beyond the Secretariat and governance bodies to include beneficiaries and national stakeholders.

Decision:

- The Independent Evaluation Panel endorses the Evaluation of the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant-Making Stages of the 2023-2025 Funding Cycle – Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) as presented in GF/IEP08/03.

Next steps:

- The IEP to develop its IEP Commentary on the quality and independence of the evaluation to be submitted to the Strategy Committee. It should note that the IEP would have expected the independent evaluators to make recommendations on maintaining implementation readiness given the bold recommendations made in light of acknowledging that current processes deliver implementation-ready grants.
- The IEP to discuss evaluation timelines as part of IEP ways of working at the Ninth IEP meeting in December 2024.

## **Evaluation Terms of Reference: HIV Prevention**

This session included a presentation by the ELO on the proposed TORs for the HIV Prevention evaluation, which the IEP was asked to consider for approval. The session's objective was to summarize how the ELO responded to and addressed IEP comments on the draft TORs, focusing on inputs by the categories of purpose, approach and TOC; key evaluation questions; users and audience; methodology and country sample; and evaluation team competencies.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Machine learning:** One IEP member queried whether the TORs should be so prescriptive of methodologies, including machine learning; the IEP Vice Chair noted that mention and use of machine learning in this and future TORs should be discussed at the Ninth IEP Meeting in December 2024, while one IEP member flagged the need to mitigate potential biases reflected in machine learning. The ELO acknowledged the concerns and noted that machine learning is one of different potential tools within an evaluation design and believe that it can be specifically helpful in analyzing large data sets.
- **User group:** The IEP Interim Chair noted with appreciation that the users of the evaluation were expanded beyond the Secretariat, including country users, Country Coordinating Mechanisms, and other partners.. One IEP member suggested soliciting feedback from national HIV programs in the TOR stage, and another IEP member asked if a steering committee for the evaluation could help amplify country voices. The ELO shared that country-level implementers would be involved in refining the evaluation questions during the inception phase, emphasizing that primary users would remain those within the Secretariat who are able to action evaluation recommendations.

- **Lower-middle income country (LMIC) participation:** The IEP asked that the independent evaluator's team include LMIC representation. The IEP Vice Chair suggested that LMIC participation in evaluations also be considered for conversations at the Ninth IEP Meeting in December 2024. IEP members flagged that the discussion should examine participation in independent evaluators' teams. The ELO agreed on the importance of increasing LMIC representation in evaluations, including LMIC-based firms and other firms with LMIC team members, while acknowledging the constraints of Global Fund procurement processes.
- **Timeline:** The Secretariat HIV Team highlighted the timeliness of this evaluation and the helpful nature of it taking place in parallel with the evaluation on gender, given the relationship between HIV prevention and gender transformative programming. The ELO flagged that results of this evaluation would be key to inform GC8 processes. One IEP member asked to clarify timelines and expectations for completing the evaluation. The ELO clarified that the 350 days allotted to this evaluation reflect the cumulative number of estimated days across all independent evaluator team members' effort and not the end to end duration.

Decision:

- The Independent Evaluation Panel approves the Evaluation Terms of Reference for HIV Prevention as presented in GF/IEP08/02.

Next steps:

- The ELO to proceed with procurement processes using the IEP-approved TORs for the HIV Prevention evaluation.
- The IEP to discuss LMIC participation and machine learning applications in evaluations at its Ninth Meeting in December 2024.

### **Evaluation Terms of Reference: Evaluation of the implementation of the Global Fund Gender Equality Strategy Objective**

This session included a presentation by the ELO on the revisions made to the proposed TORs of the Evaluation of the implementation of the Global Fund Gender Equality Strategy Objective ("gender evaluation") following an initial round of IEP input. Specifically, the ELO spoke to the sharpening of the evaluation scope and focus less on the Secretariat process and more on what is happening in Global Fund-supported disease programs to integrate gender equality approaches and programs. ELO also spoke to methodology considerations, the selection of countries and grants for deep dives, adopting gender evaluation principles, and the evaluator skills and experience required for this evaluation.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Cross-referencing:** One IEP member asked if the TORs would include cross-reference to other relevant evaluations, to which the Secretariat responded that its relevance extended to all other evaluations and workstreams as a cross-cutting topic. The ELO pointed out that the multi-year evaluation calendar initially proposed gender as a cross-cutting evaluation element but was requested by the SC to be the subject of a standalone evaluation.
- **Evaluation focus:** The IEP queried whether, in addition to looking at countries where the Gender Evaluation Marker score is zero, the ELO was considering a "positive deviance" approach. The Secretariat noted that the evaluation would look at both places where gender-equality approaches are progressing as well as those experiencing challenges. In response to an IEP member query about the absence of mentioning feminist or gender-aware evaluation

principles, the CELO called attention to the Gender Responsive Evaluation Checklist in development.

Next steps:

- The ELO to incorporate the IEP's feedback into an updated draft of the gender evaluation TORs for the IEP to approve via electronic decision.
- The ELO to provide an update on the Gender Responsive Evaluation Checklist that was initially discussed with the IEP in May 2024.

### **Evaluation Terms of Reference (TORs) Checklist**

This session involved a discussion on the Evaluation TORs Checklist, with the aim of providing feedback on its first few uses and considering changes for a future iteration.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Overall:** IEP members commended the TOR Checklist as helpful to systematically examine draft evaluation TORs, while noting that it could be further refined. IEP members also flagged that, due to the iterative work on creating the TOR Checklist, multiple versions of it had been used. In response to whether the Checklist was also used by the ELO, ELO shared that the TORs Checklist was helping to standardize quality across evaluation TORs, while noting that the Checklist had been used by the IEP as more of an assessment framework. The IEP Interim Chair flagged that the IEP would need to discuss future utility of the TORs Checklist to ensure it is used as a tool and not necessarily as an assessment framework.
- **Suggested updates to checklist and process:** The IEP Interim Chair highlighted the TORs Checklist as a helpful training tool but flagged the need to determine a single format and a way to prioritize comments that align with the evaluation report format. One IEP member suggested a web-based tool, and the ELO agreed to consider options. It was also suggested that comments' level of detail would need to be agreed upon, including adding comment rationale and weight. Some IEP members requested adding a field for broad observations on individual TORs as well as general cross-evaluation comments.

Next steps:

- The IEP will discuss the utility of the TORs Checklist as part of IEP ways of working at the Ninth IEP Meeting in December 2024. The IEP will continue to refine the TOR Checklist to keep it fit for purpose.

### **Any other business**

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Focal point role:** The IEP Interim Chair flagged that IEP focal point roles for some upcoming evaluations had not yet been assigned. One IEP member suggested that members leverage their expertise both in the evaluation topics and methodologies, requesting ELO support in outlining likely methodologies for each upcoming evaluation. IEP members shared their experiences in undertaking the quality assurance and assessment roles, including the distinct duties and time commitment entailed, as well as influencing variables. The IEP Interim Chair suggested discussion at the Ninth IEP Meeting in December 2024 on the appropriate number of each focal point type for a given evaluation.

- **Multi-year evaluation calendar:** The IEP Vice Chair noted that the Global Fund's operating expenses budget was pending approval, the results of which may require a change to the 2025 Evaluation Workplan. IEP members suggested balancing process and topic area evaluations across the multi-year evaluation calendar.
- **Recruitment:** IEP members took note that two IEP members resigned and had not been replaced and the distribution of work across the IEP and the planned upcoming recruitment in 2025.

Next steps:

- ELO to share likely methodologies for future evaluations early to leverage IEP member skills in designating focal points.
- IEP to discuss focal point assignments and structure as part of IEP ways of working at its Ninth Meeting in December 2024.

## **Closing**

The IEP Interim Chair highlighted the list of potential discussion topics for the upcoming December meeting and flagged the ongoing search for the new IEP Chair, requesting IEP member support in disseminating the opportunity to their networks. She also expressed gratitude to the Ethics Team for permitting the IEP to undertake its own conflict of interest clearance was also. She also commended the Legal and Governance Department and ELO for their support of the meeting. The Legal and Governance Department reviewed the conclusions and action items from the meeting and the decisions taken.

The CELO thanked IEP members for their inputs and reinforced the important evolution of discussions from process design to evaluation implementation. The Legal and Governance Department thanked IEP members for their attendance.

IEP members commended the support from the ELO, Legal and Governance Department and other Secretariat teams, as well as the IEP Interim Chair's strong chairing of the meeting.



## Annex 1: Decisions

Decision Point	Decision Point Text	Voting Summary		
		For	Against	Abstain
GF/IEP08/DP01	The Independent Evaluation Panel endorses the Evaluation of the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant-Making Stages of the 2023-2025 Funding Cycle – Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) as presented in GF/IEP08/03.	9		
GF/IEP08/DP02	The Independent Evaluation Panel approves the Evaluation Terms of Reference for HIV Prevention as presented in GF/IEP08/02.	9		

## Annex 2: Document List

Reference	Document Title
GF/IEP8/01	Agenda
GF/IEP8/02	Evaluation Terms of Reference: HIV Prevention
GF/IEP8/03	Funding Request and Grant Making Evaluation Final Report
GF/IEP8/04	Terms of Reference Checklist
GF/IEP8/05	Evaluation Updates

## Annex 3: Participant List

### Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP)

Nina Schwalbe, Interim Chair  
George Gotsadze, Vice Chair  
Abdallah Bchir  
Evelyn Ansah  
Fred Carden  
Florenca Guertzovich  
Caroline Lynch  
Dede Watchiba  
Josephine Watera  
Javier Hourcade Bellocq, Strategy Committee  
Evaluation Focal Point, Ex-officio, non-voting  
John Grove, Global Fund Chief Evaluation and  
Learning Officer, Ex-officio, non-voting  
Harley Feldbaum, Global Fund Head of  
Strategy and Policy Hub, Ex-officio, non-voting

### Evaluation & Learning Office (ELO)

Rita Benitez, Specialist, Learning &  
Dissemination  
Yana Daneva, Consultant  
Jutta Hornig, Team Coordinator  
Rhiannon James, Senior Specialist, Evaluation  
Partnerships  
Roy Mutandwa, Evaluation Specialist, C19RM  
John Puvimanasinghe, Senior Specialist,  
Evaluation & Learning  
Michael Schroll, Senior Specialist, Evaluation &  
Learning  
Marc Theuss, Specialist, Evaluation  
Olga Varetska, Specialist, Evaluation

### Global Fund Secretariat

Arielle Weinstein-Godin, Support Officer, Legal  
and Governance Department  
Stephanie Martone, Governance Specialist,  
Legal and Governance Department  
Lindsay Smith, Manager, Communication and  
Information Management, Access to Funding  
Susie McLean, Senior Advisor HIV Prevention,  
Technical Assistance and Partnerships  
Maia Okruashvili, Senior Legal Counsel, Legal  
and Governance Department  
Thea Willis, Senior Technical Advisor, Gender,  
Community, Rights and Gender  
Emilomo Ogbe, Technical Advisor, Gender,  
Community, Rights and Gender

### External participants

Julia Bürgi, report writer

## Annex 4: Action Points

1.	ELO to conduct an inventory of which TOCs exist across the Secretariat in relation to the evaluations approved as part of the Multiyear Evaluation Calendar to better understand the gaps.
2.	IEP to reflect on the experience of the TEC process at the Ninth IEP meeting in December 2024 as part of a session on IEP ways of working.
3.	The IEP to develop its IEP Commentary on the quality and independence of the evaluation to be submitted to the Strategy Committee. It should note that the IEP would have expected the independent evaluators to make recommendations on maintaining implementation readiness given the bold recommendations made in light of acknowledging that current processes deliver implementation-ready grants.
4.	The IEP to discuss evaluation timelines as part of IEP ways of working at the Ninth IEP meeting in December 2024.
5.	The ELO to proceed with procurement processes using the IEP-approved TORs for the HIV Prevention evaluation.
6.	The IEP to discuss LMIC participation and machine learning applications in evaluations at its Ninth Meeting in December 2024.
7.	The ELO to incorporate the IEP's feedback into an updated draft of the gender evaluation TORs for the IEP to approve via electronic decision.
8.	The ELO to provide an update on the Gender Responsive Evaluation Checklist that was initially discussed with the IEP in May 2024.
9.	The IEP will discuss the utility of the TORs Checklist as part of IEP ways of working at the Ninth IEP Meeting in December 2024. The IEP will continue to refine the TOR Checklist to keep it fit for purpose.
10.	ELO to share likely methodologies for future evaluations early to leverage IEP member skills in designating focal points.
11.	IEP to discuss focal point assignments and structure as part of IEP ways of working at its Ninth Meeting in December 2024.